

Number Three

**BIG
FAME****IRISH BULLETIN**July Issue10^{Pe}

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE NORTH - WHAT WE CAN DO ~

The 6 Counties of North Ireland occupied by Britain are approaching the most serious crisis since the "troubles began in 1969. The Loyalist paramilitary organisations (the UDA and the rest) have formed themselves into a joint Ulster Army Council and Loyalist politicians have prepared detailed plans for a Loyalist Provisional Government of Ulster, poised to take control of the north should they get anything less than they want from the Convention. And they want everything. The Army stands by - and even collaborates by providing lists of Provisionals and "realitives and sympathisers" (Sunday Times) - as Loyalist sectarian killers attempt to intimidate the Catholic ghettos into accepting a Loyalist state.

It seems to us that the British Government is going for an "acceptable" Loyalist takeover, through the Convention, as its temporary solution to the current crisis in the North. "Acceptable" that is, to the bulk of the Parliamentary Labour Party in Britain and to the bourgeoisie in Southern Ireland. A Loyalist takeover is the only type of solution that could settle the crisis in Ireland in any way favourably for British imperialism. A republican victory would be catastrophic for it; and a steady continuation of the war as it exists now, would only deepen the crisis for Britain; the social instability in Northern Ireland undermining capitalist development; the cost of the war to the British Exchequer; and the demoralisation and fatigue in the Army. Moreover, the search for a new union between the whole of Ireland and Britain is less urgent now (though it is still the long term strategy). Firstly, both Ireland and Britain are in the EEC - in 6 years' time, the border will be economically unimportant. (That was one of the things sorted out by the British Government in the EEC renegotiations.) Secondly, the current economic crisis - in Ireland and Britain particularly - has made less pressing the need for federal political arrangements to cope with the inflow of capital between the areas of Ireland and the shortage of skilled labour in the 6 counties.

TOWARDS THE "ACCEPTABLE" LOYALIST TAKEOVER

The problem for Britain is how to pull it off - how to make this Loyalist takeover 'acceptable'. The efforts of the Government have at least publicly centred on developing a spirit of 'moderation' in the ongoing Convention. Among the tactics which have been used (fairly successfully so far, one has to admit) to achieve this was the statement by the protestant clergyman, Reverend William Arlow, that the British Government had made a secret deal with the Provisionals that the British Army would be withdrawn if the Convention failed to reach ... an "acceptable" solution. This statement - which was set up by the Northern Ireland Office in London - produced a near hysterical response from the Loyalist politicians, who know that the days are numbered should Britain withdraw from Ireland. They need the support of imperialism.

Another more dangerous tactic, hand in hand with the public relations job, has been the way that the government has been using the assassinations of Catholics by the Loyalist paramilitary groups, especially the UDA and UVF. There has always been something of a conflict of interest between the Loyalist politicians and the Loyalist Paramilitaries. The government has been trying to play on

the fears of the Loyalist politicians (and the middle class politicians of the SDII) that should the Convention fail to produce an acceptable Loyalist takeover, the initiative will pass to the paramilitary organisations - and to the Provisional IRA. So the British Army is doing practically nothing to prevent the Loyalist paramilitaries flexing their muscles by conducting these murders.

It's useful for the Army, too - pushing the Catholics back into the ghettos, harassing them, grunting away. And it is a constant reminder to the politicians that should they fail to develop a spirit of moderation, they're almost certain to be swept away.

Along with these tactics, has been the insistent attempt by the British Government to reintroduce the Protestant dominated Royal Ulster Constabulary into the Catholic areas. At the end of June, a new move was announced by the British. Two squads are to be deployed to - supposedly - deal with sectarian assassinations. One is a CID squad which will investigate the area after a killing. The fact that there are twice as many Catholics as Protestants killed, and those Catholics mainly killed inside Catholic areas under the cameras of the British Army, means that this will be a saturation of the Catholic areas by protestant police to repress and mop up after yet another murder. They will be backed up by a Special Patrol Group (SPG) designed along the lines of the SPG here. An armed force of police officers, their role will be to seal off the area and cover the CID detectives. The whole project follows on from the 'sheesh-horning' of the RUC into the ghettos, which has been going on since the truce began, at the turn of this year.

DANGEROUS GAME ~ TRUCE THREATENED

It's a dangerous game and the truce may break down at any moment under the pressure of the sectarian assassinations. If that happens, all talk of moderation in the Convention will be swept away overnight. In any case, we can be certain that even if the Convention produces a Loyalist takeover acceptable to the British Government (unlikely), such a settlement will in no way be acceptable to the minority in N. Ireland.

So we believe that the Republicans in the ghettos are faced with the real possibility of attempted pogroms in the coming months - perhaps as soon as the July/August Orange marching season. The British Army has spent the past six years in Ireland disarming the Republican ghettos and collaborating in the build up of arms on the Loyalist side. No doubt in this coming period, the media will continue to present the British Army as a peacekeeping army - but we must be clear that the British Army is the single most important obstacle to the self defence of the Catholic areas. Clearly it has never been as urgent as it is today to build an effective campaign in Britain fighting for both demands of the Troops Out Movement.

TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND NOW!
SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH AS A WHOLE!

* * * * *

What conclusions do we draw from this analysis? What does it mean for our work around Ireland?

Firstly, it means that we have to take seriously the need for rapid mass mobilisations over the summer if necessary. We cannot afford gaps of weeks before we can react to sudden changes for the worse.

This task is likely to be particularly difficult since it is summer. So we propose a Contingency Committee in the Troops Out Movement to prepare for this. This was accepted at the June National Coordinating Committee of the T.O.M. With this organisational move, we also proposed that the slogan "No To A Loyalist State!!" should be raised as an extra slogan allowed by the T.O.M. The danger must be made clear to everyone. Both these proposals were accepted after debate. The Revolutionary Communist Group were the only T.O.M. delegates to vote against both proposals.

The point of this slogan at this time is to fill out what we mean, at this time, by "Self Determination for the Irish People as a Whole".

We have argued for relief work to be taken up by branches for some time. And several have done. We see it as a way of concretely aiding the Republican ghettos in the face of civil war, while also enabling us to extend our propaganda work, particularly in the Irish working class areas. We don't see the building of a relief campaign as counterposed to the main tasks of the T.O.M. As a means of propaganda and agitation, as well as of giving some support to the minority in the 6 Cos. The money raised will go to relief committees which provide support to families intimidated out of their homes, to the whole of the besieged areas at such times as internment and the UWC strike last year - and in the event of major pogroms. Money is wanted for food, clothing, places to stay, transport - when your whole house is burnt down, you have nothing.

There will be a big Free Speech on Ireland demonstration in London in November. It is being organised on a broad basis on the initiative of Joan Maynard, the British Campaign for Withdrawal from Northern Ireland and the British Peace Committee, who supported the 27 October demonstration. The T.O.M. has been banned from using Trafalgar Square, and from marching down Fleet St. Any major protest against this suppression is to be actively supported.

There are several other TOM activities planned, including the week of action in July, the demonstration against the Jenkins' laws and so on. But there have been wrangles within the T.O.M. about the Labour Movement Conference, especially over the inviting of Leo Abse MP to the Conference.

This matter has to be sorted out. As the scene in Ireland changes, major splits in the ruling class and in Parliament are possible. We must be clear about how to work with MPs. We think it was a mistake to invite Abse. We voted against it when it was proposed in London because - 1. We thought (and still do) that it would put many radical women off the T.O.M. and hamper the task of building the T.O.M. as a popular campaign. Abse is one of the proposers of the new abortion amendment bill. Women from the Women's Movement have been among the most active workers in the T.O.M. Abse is to many women what Powell is to many black people. 2. We don't agree with his way of seeing 'self-determination'. However, the decision was discussed in all London branches of the T.O.M. before the decision was made. We think he should have been demolished from the platform.

A split from the right of the Labour Party on Ireland is possible. In that case, we must be placed as best to help develop it, and weaken the 'bi-partisan' policy. So what we must be able to do is have a way of working with the Labour Party Right if they come to us. It shouldn't be a major axis of work. The major axis in terms of Parliamentary work must be to win and consolidate support for the T.O.M. in the Labour Party Left.

But for any right-wing Labour MP's the tactic must be to keep a clear organisational and political separation from them, while offering them TOM platforms (provided they support the TOM slogans), on those occasions when the needs of the Irish struggle dictate. And when confusion among the immediate audience, and TOM sympathisers who might hear or read of the meeting, can be avoided by the political separation of TOM from the chauvinist position being clearly demonstrated - AND - as long as it doesn't alienate a significant number of people who might otherwise have been attracted to the Troops Out Campaign.

TOM should always be prepared to use MP's - but we have to be clear about who's using who. Developing the power of the TOM (and at the same time therefore contributing to the morale of the Republican ghettos) must be the point of all our work. Work with MP's should never be our focal point - and it shouldn't be over-emphasised, but it can help to develop that power.

* * * * *

CONTENTS

NEWS OF THE IRISH STRUGGLE MAY/JUNE pages 5 - 14

including:	the results of the Convention elections	p 5
	response in Britain and the South	p 6
	"Amazing" spirit of moderation in "Con"vention	p 7
	Splits and feuding among Loyalists	p 7
	Establishment of Ulster Loyalist Army Council	p 8
	and Provisional Government of Ulster	
	The UDA in Britain	p 9
	Sectarian assassination	p 9&10
	UDR - Loyalist paramilitary links	p 10
	The situation in the Republican areas:	p 11
	- resistance grows, the struggle continues	p 12
	What the British Govt is up to - extension of Jenkins' Act, announcement of new laws	p 13&14

THE SITUATION IN THE 26 COUNTIES pages 14A & 14B

including:	economic crisis, Criminal Law Jurisdiction Bill, Irish Army, class struggle, growing support for Provisionals, IRSP-Official feud - mediator found.	
------------	---	--

FEATURES pages 15 - 22

including:	Irish women's struggle - report from Armagh	p 15
	Revolutionary Socialism in Ireland -	
	reports on meetings with Peoples' Democracy(PD) p 16&17	
	and with the Irish Republican Socialist Party p 18&19	
	Report on a recent visit to Belfast by a Big Flame militant	p 20&21
	Pupil power in Belfast threatens church hierarchy - the case of Canon Murphy	

NEWS FROM THE TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT pages 24 - 27

including:	Big Flame's reply to Workers' Fight's attack on the T.O.M. following the May 24th Conference	p 24&25
	Report on the T.O.M. National Co-ordinating Committee meeting of Saturday 28th June	p 26
	Relief work begins in Kirkby TOM	p 27

IN THE COURTS page 27

including:	the Birmingham conspiracy trial and the odd goings on in the Birmingham pub bombings trial	
------------	--	--

NEWS ROUND-UP: MAY/JUNE ^{PS}

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

May 3rd Results of the Convention Elections:

UNIONISTS/LOYALISTS (anti-powersharing)		MAJORITY
OFFICIAL UNIONIST PARTY (Harry West)	19 seats	
DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST PARTY (Paisley)	14 seats	
VANGUARD UNIONIST PARTY (Bill Craig)	14 seats	
TOTAL FOR THE United Ulster Unionist Coalition:		47 seats
-----		-----
BOURGEOIS PRO-POWERSHARING PARTIES		MINORITY
UNIONIST PARTY OF N. IRELAND (Faulkner)	5 seats	
ALLIANCE PARTY (Oliver Napier)	8 seats	
SDLP (Gerry Fitt)	17 seats	
Total:		30 seats

Given the structure of the N. Ireland state, these results were a foregone conclusion - so it's no surprise that the ultra-reactionary Loyalist alliance, led by Messrs Paisley, Craig and West, now dominates the Convention. Since the Brits are currently trying for a solution based on an "acceptable" Loyalist takeover via the Convention, it's worth having a look at some of the comings and goings in this "Con"vention. First, though, it's worth noting the massive support to the Provisionals' campaign for a boycott of the elections. In all, 210,000 catholics did not vote in the election, compared to only 156,000 who voted for the SDLP.

May 5th: Panic in the Southern Government

On May 5th, Connor Cruise O'Brien (arch-scab and Minister for Posts and Telegraphs in the southern government), commenting on the election results, said that there could now be no power-sharing solution in the north, and that there was little that the southern government could do to force the British government not to give in to the Loyalists' demands. This caused widespread panic in the Dublin government and among the middle-class politicians of the SDLP in the north, whose sole ambition for the moment is to share power with people like Paisley and Craig.

In the end, Cosgrave, the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) said that it was still the Irish Government's policy to get power-sharing in the north, and not indefinite British Direct Rule, which is what O'Brien had implied he would prefer.

This shows once again that the Southern bourgeoisie are as terrified at the prospect of being forced by the struggle of the catholic working class in the northern ghettos into a united Ireland, as is the British ruling class. They know that it would mean almost certain social revolution.

May 6th: Tory Support for Loyalist Takeover

Commenting on the election results, Airey Neave (Tory shadow on N. Ireland) said that it was no longer possible to talk of enforcing power-sharing on a reluctant majority. He also said that Rees ought to start re-interning Provisional IRA members. This statement caused a great hoo-hah. Eventually it was withdrawn by the Tories, but not before the Tory/Labour bi-partisan policy had been slightly shaken.

May 8th: Convention meets for first time under Justice Lowry

The Convention had its first formal meeting in Stormont castle, under the chairmanship of Justice Robert Lowry. This pig is in no way impartial - he once presided over a case in which two paratroopers who had half drowned a comrade called Martin Walsh, were accused of having then shot him in cold blood. Naturally the honorable, "neutral" judge excused the soldiers involved in the murder.

After 40 minutes of the meeting, Glen Barr - a Vanguard Unionist and prominent member of the Ulster Workers' Council - walked out because, he announced, four Loyalist prisoners were being held in Scottish jails, instead of being repatriated like the Price sisters to N. Ireland.

May 9th: Provisional IRA declaration "No to a Loyalist state"

The Provisionals announced from Dublin that: "the organisation which smashed Stormont will not tolerate any attempt to re-establish a Loyalist government". A whole page of Republican News is devoted to an article "Why we must resist the Loyalist takeover"

May 18th: Trouble brews at the Convention

Major disagreements have broken out in the Standing Orders Committee of the Convention - a 12 man committee with a big Loyalist majority, chaired by Paisley. Basically, the Loyalists are insisting that only one, majority report goes to Westminster from the Convention, naming the kind of government for N. Ireland suggested by the Convention. This would mean that the pro-power-sharing politicians wouldn't have the chance to put their "views" to Westminster. So the SDLP and Alliance parties want a minority report to be prepared too.

On May 19th, the SDLP start a major campaign to get the right to this minority report. They say they are going to take this issue to the High Court.

But three days later, Sir Lowry gives his ruling as Chairman of the Convention that he can't stand in the way of the Standing Orders Committee. The SDLP "reluctantly" accept the decision ie completely back down. Signs of things to come

May 26th: "Shock" revelation from Rev Arlow - Britain intends to withdraw from Ireland if Convention fails.

Rev William Arlow, one of the clergymen who took part in the talks which fixed up the bi-lateral truce between the British Army and the Provisional IRA, released a "shock" statement saying that he believed that the Brits had given a firm commitment to the Provisionals to withdraw from N. Ireland in the event of the failure of the Convention. The N. Ireland office put out a statement denying that any such commitment had been given. Rees made no statement, however, and within hours Arlow's statement had whipped up "furious reaction from Loyalist politicians who accused the Ulster Secretary, Mr Rees, of betraying the Province and destroying the credibility of the Constitutional Convention." This led to the revelation that the Loyalists had made plans for a Provisional Loyalist Government and Army to "defend Ulster" (more later).

Four days later the Guardian revealed what most people already suspected - that Rees had known that Arlow was going to make his statement long before it happened. In fact it's clear that the whole thing was a set-up to scare the Loyalist politicians into being more reasonable in the Convention. (The N. Ireland Office has a lot of experience in these things).

21st June: "Amazing" spirit of "moderation" appears in Convention

After ignoring the Convention for two weeks or so, the press began to report on "Unique Unity at Convention Debate" - Irish Weekly and "Temporary Togetherness" - Economist. Republican News noted a new spirit of "aquietence" among the SDLP scabs, and commenting on the new-found moderation of the Loyalists in the debates on finding an "acceptable solution" said that the Loyalists had evidently learnt tricks from their English masters - "they've learnt how to hold on to power by wooing the 'minority', luring carefully selected representatives into carefully selected positions and stifling protest by granting a few rights, as if they were granting great privileges."

Where did this spirit of moderation come from so suddenly? It's clear that the Rev Arlow statement terrified the Loyalist politicians, but the mounting sectarian assassinations by the Loyalist paramilitaries was also beginning to have its effect. As the Economist pointed out: "Reaction throughout the Province to the latest spiral of sectarian violence, culminating in the death of a three-year old Catholic girl in her father's booby-trapped car, seems to have concentrated the convention's mind marvellously." But it went on to warn: "The crunch is still to come, when the convention gets down to discussing an 'acceptable' system of government. They're dead right.

THE LOYALISTS - splits/preparations for takeover/assassinations

May 3rd: Flare-up in UDA-UVF feud

In the past three or four months, tensions between the UDA and the UVF have been growing. The UDA has been trying to consolidate its popularity and 'respectability' in the Loyalist areas. It's become involved in community work - doing 'meals on wheels' for old people, kids projects etc. and has been strengthening its links with the Loyalist politicians - particularly the Vanguard Party led by Craig. The UVF has been increasingly isolated, especially in E. Belfast.

All this has resulted in numerous shootings and over the weekend of May 3/4th widespread fighting broke out in E. Belfast. Extra UDA men were brought in tens into the UDA headquarters in W. Belfast when it was thought that this place would come under-attack too. Among those treated in hospital after the fighting was the head of the UVF - a thug called Ken Gibson. Meanwhile the UDA has offered £5,000 as a reward for information leading to two of their senior members - thought to have been kidnapped by the UVF.

LIFE IN

A ten year-old girl was wounded in a shooting incident in Belfast on Sunday 4 May when gunmen opened fire from a passing car on pedestrians in the Catholic Springfield road area. The girl was a Catholic.

BELFAST

ANOTHER ORANGE

The existence in N. Ireland of another Loyalist murder organisation was confirmed in the course of the trial of an 18 year old Protestant accused of attempted murder. The organisation is called "The Ulster Assassination Volunteers" which operates in Belfast.

MURDER SQUAD

May 15th: UVF tries to bomb two UDA clubs

18

Members of the UVF attempted unsuccessfully to blow up two social clubs run by the UDA in the Protestant part of the Ardoyne area. Both bombs were defused - one by the UDA, the other by the Brits. 2 men were also badly shot up in incidents on June 9th - also part of the UDA - UVF feud.

May 21st: UVF's new policy document on assassinations released

On Wednesday May 21st, the UVF's new policy document was released. They promised to 'harass and intimidate those who give shelter and support to the IRA'. As if to emphasise the meaning of 'harass and intimidate' the next day Mr Gerald De'ath, father of four, was killed when he picked up a booby-trapped thermos flask at Glengormley. The document continued: 'The UVF would always make sure their target was connected with the IRA'. On Friday May 23rd three UVF men burst into a flat in North Belfast and shot dead Thomas McErlean and his brother John. Neither of these two men had anything to do with any military organisation. They were just working-class catholics.

May 28th: Establishment of United Ulster Loyalist Army Council

At a dinner attended by 400 Loyalist politicians and paramilitaries to celebrate the first anniversary of the fall of the power-sharing Executive, Andy Tyrie - commander of the UDA - announced the setting up of a United Loyalist Army Council which would be made up of all the paramilitary groups except the UVF. The Army Council also includes the Ulster Special Constabulary Association made up of many ex-B Specials. "The establishment of this united front reflects the growing obsession among Loyalists that Ulster is about to be deserted by Britain" - Guardian.

The Army will be made up of four brigades, making a total of 15,000 men. Each brigade will be made up by one of the four paramilitary organisations involved. The setting up of this Loyalist Army provoked "angry protests" from the SDLP. Gerry Fitt called on Merlyn Rees to do something about it. Rees, of course, did nothing.

QUOTE FROM "The Orange Cross" (Motto: Their only crime is Loyalty) - in the aftermath of the Rev Arlows statement

"If Britain is going to sell out her own kith and kin in the North, then let us hear of it as soon as possible and without the deceipts and lies we have been accustomed to for over six years.

If it comes let Britain remember that the Ulster safe-guard at her back door will be lost and another 4,000 miles of water would have to be covered before she would see a friendly American face. The USA are sorry people now that they abandoned Vietnam to the Communists, and Britain had better be careful that they will not create their own Vietnam - RIGHT ON THEIR OWN BACK DOOR-STEP!

June 1st: Barr reveals plans for a Loyalist "Provisional Government"

Vanguard politician Glen Barr revealed the names of the cabinet ministers in the Loyalist "provisional government", plans for which have been drawn up. The ministers would be: Andy Tyrie (Commander of the UDA); Glen Barr; William Craig (leader of the Vanguard party); Harry West (leader of the Official Unionists); Jim Smith; power-worker Billy Kelly, Sam McClure, John McKeague, Hugh Petrie, Col. Edward Brush, Jackie Scott, George Green, Bob Marno and Bill Hannigan (cont.)

The one well-known Loyalist missing from this line-up is Rev. Ian Paisley. Despite the fact that he seems to be playing a 'leader' role in the Convention, apparently he's to be cast in the role of "leader of the opposition" in a post-Loyalist take-over Stormont. The Loyalist claim that they've already been approached by an Arab state offering support but not the Libyans.

According to one Loyalist, quoted in the Dublin Sunday World, in the event of Britain imposing economic sanctions on an independent Ulster and the Royal Navy blockading Northern ports, "their organisation in England was capable of waging a campaign of terror that would make the Provos campaign 'look like a bun fight'.

THE UDA IN BRITAIN: an indication of its massive strength

May 9th: UDA "West Indian hater" jailed for murder in Scotland

Brian Hosie, senior member of UDA in Scotland was jailed for life for the murder of a black brother who resisted him when he was trying to extort money. Hosie confessed to "hating W. Indians". Hosie's three fellow accused, all members of the UDA, were found not guilty, but jailed under the Firearms Act.

June 3rd: 2 UDA men serving sentences in Scotland returned to 6 Counties.

Following Glen Barr's walk-out on the first day of the Convention, Rees has caved in and agreed to have 2 UDA men flown back to serve their sentences in N. Ireland.

June 17th: Supreme Commander UDA in Britain jailed for 10 years

Thomas Thompson (43) of Langrove Street Liverpool was found guilty of transpiring to contravene the Firearms and Explosive Substances Act and taking part in the management of the UDA. Police claim that Thompson is the supreme commander of UDA in Britain. His right hand man, John Gadd, was jailed last November. But the jailing of two of them won't make much difference!

SECTARIAN ASSASSINATIONS AND A SECTARIAN STRIKE

June 21st: Of 400 Catholics murdered, only 13 convictions

John Hume, deputy leader of the scab SDLP, challenged Rees to take action against the Loyalist paramilitary organisations. He said: "The authorities know very well the organisations involved yet the leaders are not even arrested for questioning. Of nearly 400 catholics murdered by sectarian assassins there have been only 13 killings for which there have been convictions." Another survey showed that in the past three years, the ratio of catholics to protestants murdered is 228 catholics killed to 121 protestants.

Examples: 4th May 10 year old catholic girl shot by passing car; 15th May, random bombings of catholic pubs in Ardoyne, North Queen street and the Whiteabbey Inn. 19th May, 17 year old catholic shot in Derry - killing claimed by "The Young Militants" - junior part of the UVF. 25th May: 6 children escape when their house in Charlemont village, Armagh. Later a catholic owned pub was bombed in same village. 21st May - two catholic brothers killed while playing cards in Belfast flat, claimed by Protestant Action Force. 24th May: 17 year old girl and 18 year old man shot as they walked along Woodstock Road, Belfast - from passing van. May 27th: 52 year old catholic lorry driver killed by a lone gunman while sitting in his cab. May 27th: Catholic garage

17th June: Loyalists raid on UDR barracks and take big arms haul

Loyalists wearing UDR uniforms carried out a massive arms raid on a UDR base in Magherafelt - and used two UDR Land-rovers to take away 220 rifles and loads of ammunition. The raiders had no trouble getting in, or finding their way to the armoury. Two days later, the stolen weapons were found completely buried in a tank of pig manure. Apparently a unit from the UDR went straight to the place. The Guardian commented: "The success of the search has relieved embarrassment within the UDR. But the ease with which the guns were stolen by a gang who clearly knew their way around the centre has still to be explained. There have also been suggestions from critics of the UDR that the search parties were curiously lucky or well informed."

MORALE IN THE ARMY/TORTURE ONCE MORE IN N. IRELAND?

31st May: Guardian interviews deserter

The Guardian carries a major story in the centre pages - an interview with John Murphy, a Lance Corporal in the British Army who deserted last October. He claimed that he deserted after being shot - and that 15 other soldiers deserted with him - 8 from the medical corps and 8 from the Artillery. "It was the major topic in the medical room every night" he said.

11th June: RUC are again using Torture

The RUC Special Branch and the British Army had renewed and intensified their torture methods, the Association for Legal Justice claimed in a statement issued during the week. They stated that Dungmurry RUC station is the most recently established interrogation centre for catholic areas in W. Belfast. "The use of torture to get 'confessions' has the appearance of replacing internment, in order to get 'legal' convictions."

THE SITUATION IN THE REPUBLICAN AREAS - ***Resistance grows - the struggle continues***

Both harrassment of the Republican ghettos, and the resistance of the people to that harrassment from the British Army, UDR and RUC + the Loyalist assassination squads, remains high. Central in this resistance is the Provisional IRA, which in the course of the truce, has once more built up tremendous support in the catholic areas. A report from a Big Flame comrade recently returned from the north:

"The people are very confident. Some of them look forward to a Loyalist attack - not for the sake of it, but because they want the whole thing over with. They're sick of the situation dragging on. It's got to come to a head, and the sooner the better."

Derry has something of the atmosphere it had in the days of "Free Derry" - like a No-Go area. Some of the most wanted Provos can walk around, teasing the Army, who know that if they lift them the truce will break down immediately. Free Derry radio began broadcasting once again on July 3rd, and the Bogside Community Association has conducted a referendum on whether or not there should be a community police force set up to patrol the 'No-go' areas. On the 9th June in Derry, the windscreen of an Army land-rover was shattered after a patrol had come under attack from 20 militants who hurled stones at it. The patrol had been in the Creggan trying to make an arrest. Rubber bullets were fired by the troops trying to disperse the crowd. Sunday 28th June saw a Sinn Fein march in Derry whose size amazed the organisers.

MORE NEWS FROM THE REPUBLICAN STRUGGLE ... P13
June 15th: Truce under strain - Provos allege increased British Army harrassment in Derry

The Provisionals have released a statement that increased harrassment by the British Army, especially in the Creggan estate in Derry, had placed the truce in jeopardy. They have catalogued a list of incidents over the last three weeks, ranging from provocation to arrests and assaults. A number of boys were arrested in the last week and badly mistreated by soldiers in the Creggan.

17th May: Housing Executive may be broken up

A community paper in the catholic Andersonstown area of Belfast has revealed plans to hand back housing to local councils, and to shut down the Housing Executive. The importance of this is that the Housing Executive was set up 2 years ago as an attempt by Britain to reform housing and take it out of the hands of Loyalist dominated and gerrymandered local councils, who continually discriminated against catholic working class families in the allocation of housing. The plans are now to hand housing back to the local councils - part of the Loyalist takeover. The northern section of the Irish TUC have committed themselves to fight tooth and nail against the plans.

In the same issue, Andersonstown News reports that 200 flats in Divis flats are suffering from damp, and that direct action by people living in the catholic Ladybrook estate against buses driving down their roads to turn round, thus endangering the lives of kids playing in the streets, had brought about a response from the bus executive - they were going to stop all bus services to Ladybrook!

WHAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS UP TO:

On 14th May the Prevention of Terrorism Act is extended for six months. Jenkins promises to phase it out the next time it comes up AND MAYBE REPLACE IT WITH PERMANENT MEASURES. 20th May - the N. Ireland Fair Employment Bill gets its 2nd reading in the House of Commons "making discrimination in employment in N. Ireland illegal". As everyone knows, passing laws in the House of Commons makes little difference in the north - just look what happened to the Power-sharing Executive, which was also legitimised by Westminster. On 25th May, Rees announces new measures to "tighten the gun laws in N. Ireland". The measures? The minimum age for legally possessing a gun is raised from 16 to 18, and the Protestant gun clubs are to renegotiate the number of rifles they can hold with the Protestant dominated RUC. These measures are merely supposed to placate 'public opinion' - not to remove from the Loyalists any of the 30,000 or so "legally held guns" which they are known to have. Catholics, of course, in practice are not allowed permission by the RUC to "legally hold guns".

June 19th: Rees announces new tougher anti-Republican law

Confirmation of British plans for an "acceptable" Loyalist take-over came today with the announcement of a new amendment to the N. Ireland Emergency Provisions Act. Among the new measures are plans to outlaw disguises of any kind, to bring in penalties for people who "plan terrorism", and to give the army greater legal backing for searches, questioning and arrest.

June 20th: Rees introduces Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Bill

This bill is part of an anti-Republican package with the southern Government - to make people charged with offences in the UK who are caught in south Ireland subject to trial in the south - and vice versa. This bosses' conspiracy replaces the normal

PA
legal relations between countries ie. no extradition for political offences!. Part of the package is that the Southern government is introducing a similar law, which has already had its second reading in Dail Eireann. This is the way that the bosses want to unite Ireland!

27th June: New RUC elite ~~squad~~ formed to 'deal with sectarian assassinations'

Sir James Flanagan announces the formation of an elite force of RUC detectives to combat sectarian murder. It's to be known as the A squad, and is to work alongside the 250 members of the Ulster Special Patrol Group (SPG). After a sectarian murder, the SPG will move into the area, and seal it off - enabling the 40 A squad detectives to make a complete investigation.

The Guardian reported: "The measures have disappointed many local politicians and observers".

IN FACT, the formation of this squad is a very clever move by the Brits - faced with mounting protest over the number of catholics assassinated in the past couple of months - with the British Army standing by and doing practically nothing about it. It is an attempt to reintroduce the RUC into the catholic areas from which they were expelled - never to return - in 1969. Under the guise of 'protecting the catholics' Rees is attempting to pull off this stunt. The hypocrisy is unbelievable. In fact, he couldn't give a damn about the catholics, and is just preparing for the Loyalist takeover.

28th June: 2nd reading for amendment to Emergency Provisions Act

Rees ~~rushes~~ through Parliament the 2nd reading of the amendment mentioned on the previous page - first announced only 9 days before. The Guardian comments: "The legislation changes the procedure for internment without trial and makes it easier to get terrorists to the courts. The Bill allows the Government to have it both ways in Ulster; if Ministers have to return to signing detention orders they will have a better system to work with; if detention is abolished altogether it will be easier to try the people who until now have been locked up without trial.

INTERNMENT: In these past two months, the rate of releases has slowed down noticeably. Only 27 internees were released in May, causing Sinn Fein to issue a stern warning that the truce was in jeopardy if the rate was not increased. In June 34 internees were released - still leaving 270 men illegally held without charge or trial (not to mention the hundreds 'legally' held under bourgeois law and order.)

LATE NEWS LATE NEWS: Rees says he is convinced the assassinations are not the work of the major paramilitary (Loyalist) organisations - and that's why he's not taking action against them. (Remember that it was Rees who legalised the UVF last year). As Rees was speaking, the UVF made a statement saying that it did indeed do anti-catholic assassinations - but only against "known Republicans who status had been checked by its own 'intelligence' organisation - AND INFORMATION PASSED ON FROM THE SECURITY FORCES".

ECONOMICS IN NORTH IRELAND:

10th May: Orme - the Tribune Minister of State for N. Ireland announces the nationalisation of Harland and Wolff "under workers' control", as a condition for the government pumping in £50 million to "make it profitable". The fact that Harland and Wolff was a centre of the reactionary UWC stoppage and that the workforce is 90% Loyalist, gives us an idea of what "workers' control" will mean. Meanwhile, the job of Managing Director is thrown open to the whole workforce.

11 May; Stan Orme announces the government's decision not to help the north's ailing computer industry - so 700 people are given redundancy notices. On 31st May, the latest unemployment figures for the north are revealed: 37,000 wholly unemployed - 7.1%. In Newry the rate is 20%; in Dungannon 17.1%. The economic crisis is hitting the north hard. On 14th May N. Ireland gets £12 million from the EEC development fund.

WORKERS IN SOUTH BETTER OFF THAN WORKERS IN NORTH - FIGURES

The average gross weekly earnings of men manual workers:

North Ireland (April 1974): £37.40

South Ireland (Sept 1974): £43.57

THE SITUATION IN THE 26 COUNTIES

For the southern Government - a coalition between the Labour Party and Fianna Gael - the major problems are how to survive a vote on the Criminal Jurisdiction Bill (the one that they've agreed with Wilson, in which they'll try and sentence members of the IRA for any offences the British Army decides they've done in the north - ie making the whole of Ireland a single area as far as certain laws are concerned); how to grapple with the deep economic crisis and the current militancy of the working-class.

The Criminal Jurisdiction Bill: The coalition has a majority of two over Fianna Fail, led by Jack Lynch, which is making (hypocritical) republican noises once again. The opposition will vote against the Bill - and so may two Labour TD's in Dail Eireann (MP = TD in the Irish Parliament). If that happens, the coalition will fall. Already, the final vote has been long delayed by the long Committee stage - and the government's reluctance to face the final vote.

The Economic situation: This is increasingly serious, and dominates the news in the south, along with speculation as to whether Ireland should break the links which tie the value of the Irish pound to the British pound. Inflation is running at 24% - 3% higher than in Britain, and is forecast to hit 32%. Basic food necessities are inflating at 40%, and there are 103,000 people unemployed. Every day come news of massive redundancies - particularly in the Textile and shoe industries, and in construction. The EEC regulations are beginning to act unfavourably in some respects: Beef farmers were recently hit very hard when the EEC Commission decided to reduce the intervention price for beef; EEC Transport regulations which come into force on Jan 1st 1976 will increase the cost of living by 4%.

Because of increasing poverty PRIESTS IN CERTAIN AREAS ARE REFUSING TO TAKE COLLECTIONS, saying that their congregations cannot afford it. (Meanwhile church attendance continues to fall off, particularly among young people, very dramatically). Headlines in the Irish press of July 1st were "Emigration back again". On the same day, though, there was a report in the Daily Telegraph that Irish people claiming Social Security in Britain were being refused it, and instead given the offer of tickets back to Ireland.

As far as a break with sterling is concerned - the farmers want it because the devaluation of the £ over the past three years ~~xxx~~ has meant higher prices of imports for farmers, but because the EEC has adjusted within the EEC against the devaluation - no increase in exported farm product prices. Capitalists generally don't favour it - they don't feel confident enough to impose the cuts in public expenditure, and the cuts in wages that would be necessary to get an advantage out of it.

Hopes for solving this situation lie mainly on the prospects for oil and gas discoveries offshore. In May Marathon confirmed a major gas strike in Irish waters - but there has been quite a legal battle growing over whether the coastal waters around north Ireland are the property of the south, or Britain. This goes to the heart of the Irish constitution, which maintains jurisdiction over the whole of Ireland - and which some politicians in the south want to redraft, recognising N. Ireland as a defacto state. The oil and gas strikes have already brought in investment, eg. a £5 million oil base for Cork, and £13 million plastics factory announced by the GAF Corporation (a US multinational), and the setting up of a £60 million place for building concrete oil rigs (a French consortium announced this).

STRIKES - RENT STRIKES - FOOD CO-OP: The Irish working-class is on the move. In the past two months, there has been the national rail strike (one day), as well as strikes in Sugar Co. plants, and actions by dockers to refuse to unload cars coming into Ireland, in support of a ban called for by car assembly unions. There have also been strikes in the post office, and by dustmen in Dublin. There's also been a major strike at Crown Controls Ltd, an American owned plant in Galway. This strike, over mobility & management's attempt to smash shop-floor organisation, caused the government to 'step in' to solve it.

The June 20th issue of An Phoblacht reports a widespread rent strike in Cork. The June issue of the Starry Plough, paper of IRSP, reports a large food-co-op started by women in Ballymun. Also IRSP has organised a number of 'fish-ins'.

IRISH ARMY: Shortly after the Convention elections, Coonor Cruise O'Brien said that in a 'doomsday' situation, the Irish Army could at the most hold only two northern towns. This was hotly denied by the Minister of Defence. Also in early May, the first battalion of Irish paratroopers was formed - and held practice jumps "which might simulate the situation they might find themselves in should they have to jump into towns in the north". Meanwhile, on June 22, the Dublin Sunday World revealed that there would be yet another delay in the equipping of the Air Corps with CM170 Super Magister strike aircraft. The government's excuse - that there had been strikes in the French aircraft industry - turned out to be false. The Sunday World comments: "Some air corps personnel are now convinced that the long delay is part of an operation to 'neutralise' the Defence Forces in the event of a Doomsday situation in the North."

ROSE DUGDALE WINS AFTER 5 WEEK HUNGER STRIKE: Rose Dugdale and Rita O'Hare have been protesting against conditions in Limerick Jail, where they're held. They're demanding free association; open visits; the right to receive letters from friends, and the use of their own notepaper. Ms O'Hare is not allowed visits from her children, and is refusing all visits. Rose Dugdale is on hunger strike. After five weeks' of total hunger strike, the prison authorities gave in on all these points - 2 letters a week on plain paper to relatives and friends; receipt of all letters, and the right of reply to all business letters; two and in certain cases 3 visits a week; the right to receive all national and daily papers; permission to see the children.

JUNE 15th: MASSIVE PROVO DEMONSTRATION IN BODENSTOWN: An estimated 35,000 people marched to Wolfe Tone's grave in Bodenstown in a massive show of support for the Provisional IRA.

IRSP AND OFFICIAL IRA AGREE MEDIATOR: Following the long "feud" between the IRSP and the Official IRA, from which the IRSP split, a feud in which the Official IRA have simply tried to drive the IRSP off the streets of Belfast, the two organisations have agreed a mediator (after the Officials rejected 9 different previous intermediaries). Meanwhile the IRSP has been subject to a black propaganda campaign in the south following the bombing of a train carrying Official supporters. The campaign failed to stick.

IRISH WOMEN'S STRUGGLE -

Report from Armagh

P15

There is a strong group of women working in Armagh around women's issues. Below we print an account of what these women have been doing to get to use the community centre for a playgroup. Armagh is one of 4 of the 6 counties in which Nationalists outnumber Unionists (55-45) but where the voting boundaries are so rigged a Unionist majority on the local council. It is also one of the strongest areas of the provisional IRA. One explanation given has been that "in the country, you have time to think".

The Callanbridge is a Catholic estate on Armagh itself. There are 2000 kids on the estate. A community centre was built over 2 years ago; it cost £48,000. It's been empty since. The housing executive, who organised the building of the centre, refused the rent offered by the Dept. of Community Relations. The Dept. of Community Relations were to "hand it over" to Lungyvallen Community Association for six months while they decided who was going to be responsible for it. The Housing Executive didn't press the council to take on their financial obligation to the community centre.

A group of women have organised the fight against the council round the basic need of pre-school facilities on the estate. The play area is in a concrete compound and the houses on the estate are separated by concrete walls and linked by concrete steps. The community centre is the only place play-group facilities could be run.

The struggle of the working class women on the estate is against the sectarian repression of the Loyalist Council. The council claim the centre is too costly to run.

In the minutes of a meeting held in April the playgroup committee outlined their future plans.

1. Attitude of County Council - it was agreed that it was deplorable for the council to build a community centre and then just wash their hands of the matter. As with other community projects, finances should be provided by the relevant Government bodies.

2. "Site - More distress was expressed at the failure of the relevant authorities, the Tenants Association and other community bodies and their apparent lack of urgency over the opening of the community centre - the minor hall of which is an ideal site for the playgroup. We decided not to let the lack of premises deter us and decided to squat the next empty estate for the use of the playgroup. This would be a stop-gap measure until such times as the community centre was opened".

The group leafleted a "community" festival in the centre of Armagh and stopped a vintage car rally.

The community centre has been cleared out and is ready to be taken over - the Housing Exec. are ready to break it up.

News coverage in the local "Armagh Guardian" of what the women have been doing has been pretty full, including a long front page "black propaganda" piece from the Republican Clubs (Official IRA). Their press statement alleged the activity was a Provo front, to "manipulate the community". The women involved were pissed off. It won't stop them.

REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM IN IRELAND - REPORTS ON PD + IRSP

People are often confused about the way that the struggle for national freedom in Ireland is also a struggle for socialism and communism. For us in Big Flame, the struggle for communism is always inside the mass working-class struggle - often hidden, often not understood - but always there. In Ireland, the catholic working-class in the northern ghettos have been leading the struggle for the past six years. From 1968 onwards, in a very clear, exciting and spontaneous way, the catholic working-class began to demand the right to a decent life now and for an equality in housing and employment with protestant workers. This immediately brought the struggle into conflict with the privileged protestant section of the working-class, and with the State. It quickly became clear that the struggle for their own needs and for power, couldn't go forward within the confines of the N.Ireland state. The sectarian nature of the state was clearly exposed. For the struggle for equality and working-class power to move forward, the N. Ireland state had to be smashed. Only that could begin to remove the basis for the continued sectarian divisions in the working-class.

As socialists and revolutionaries, we recognise the need for conscious political leadership within the struggle. In 1970, that leadership in Ireland did not come from Marxist organisations, who were still putting out cries for 'Catholic and Protestant workers, unite and fight' to get a better N.Ireland. Only the Provisional IRA correctly saw the necessity for moving forward to smash the N. Ireland state. So they became the most important vanguard in the struggle.

This is why the most significant organisation in the struggle in the 6 counties is the Provisional IRA. It has long fulfilled the most basic class need for the proletariat - an army against imperialism and a defence force against the loyalists. This is partly the basis for the support in the communities which the IRA shares. However, as the struggle has moved forward Marxist ideas have become increasingly important - both within the Provisional IRA, ^{the} & growing importance of other revolutionary organisations in the Irish struggle. There are other organisations which explicitly call themselves socialism. Below we print accounts of interviews with two of the People's Democracy and the Irish Republican Socialist Party (we printed an interview with Bernadette McAliskey (Devlin) of the IRSP in our first issue). Both interviews were conducted in May 1975.

People's Democracy (PD):

PD came out of the rising in the late 60's. It started mainly from its University base at Queens' Belfast, but soon linked with the mass catholic working class upsurge and developed with the Civil Rights Movement. It has changed over these 6 years, and now explicitly defines itself as a Marxist revolutionary organisation.

PD has taken a leading role in many mass mobilisations, especially against internment. It has criticised Provisional Sinn Fein (political 'wing' of the Provisional IRA) for failing to mobilise people, or to get them out on the streets or to understand the importance of building class confidence and self-organisation for winning the struggle.

It has remained a fairly small organisation, though the membership has changed from the early student days and it is now a predominantly working-class organisation. They produce a weekly newspaper, the UNFREE CITIZEN (available from 632 bookshop, Birmingham)

According to PD, the forces which are controlling the present situation are the Loyalist groups, especially William Craig's Vanguard Party (and its paramilitary wing the Vanguard Service Corps), the UVF and the UDA. They analyse these groups as fascist, or say that, at least they have strong fascist elements. They thus criticise the truce - in their view all it can do is demobilise the struggle. They also criticise the tendency within the Provisional Republican Movement which says that it will be possible to talk with the Loyalist leaders.

In a situation, such as the current one, PD see their role as being to spread propaganda to deepen the understanding in the Republican ghettos, that there is going to be some kind of major Loyalist takeover. The form that this is going to take is obviously open to question, but the basic scenario that the PD draw is grim.

Along with most people, PD predict that the Convention will produce a pro-Loyalist report, probably at the end of August. The British Government will then probably try to negotiate terms. What happens after that depends on the Catholics. If they follow the SDLP there will probably be a creeping reaction and the introduction of draconian laws against the republicans, but this, they say, would not equal fascism. The provisional leadership, they see, as veering from saying 'we're all Irish together' about the Loyalists, to being able to see them as fascists.

As for the South, there are certainly sections of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie who would resist a Loyalist takeover. Southern society is under great strains at the moment and would probably be torn apart by a major growth in the struggle in the North. That is why the southern government is doing all they can do to hold back the struggle in the 6 counties and to collaborate with the British ruling class to contain it. But unless mass-work is done in the south, there is a real danger that a working-class upsurge in support of the minority in the north would be led by a bourgeois or petty bourgeois nationalist leadership. PD see the national question as also being the crucial question for the working class in the south. Although there is a high level of struggle around closures and wages, the class remains very sectional and therefore weak. They think that the work of such groups as the Socialist Workers Movement (sister organisation to IS) are bound to suffer as they ignore the national question.

PD believe that their main task at the moment is to develop their cadres to be able to argue with Sinn Fein politics and against the Officials, around such central issues as the national question, fascism, socialism and the nature of loyalism. They are also trying to recruit from amongst independent leftists involved in the struggle. On the ground, they aim to build propaganda campaigns around the nature of loyalism and the need for united defence, and to build resistance committees of the people, coordinated by a national resistance committee. This work, they say, is difficult at the moment as most such committees were run by the Provisionals.

While the analysis of the PD contains many valuable insights, it's clear that they lost a lot of ground by not becoming involved as an active part of the military struggle until recently. It is the political content of the whole struggle, including the armed struggle, that must lay the basis for revolutionary politics in Ireland at the moment. Not to be at the centre of that is to be partly outside it.

IRSP (IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY) P18

We have already had some material on the IRSP. We are just going to print some excerpts from a recent interview with three IRSP members in Derry. The IRSP newspaper, The Starry Plough, is available from 632 Bookshop, Birmingham.

Can you tell us about the beginning of the IRSP ?

The IRSP was set up in December 1974, the bulk of it coming from the Officials. The reasons for their leaving at the Ard Fheis (Conference) in November were that they saw a collapse of internal democracy, disagreement over the national question, and disagreement with the virtual demilitarisation of the Official IRA over the last two years. The organisation allowed little internal debate. Other people who joined the organisation came partly from PD and partly from the Provos.

While the officials have a stageist theory of the struggle in Ireland, the Provos have a militarist strategy coupled with incoherent political analysis. Sinn Fein is little more than a propaganda wing of the Provos.

On the left there is also PD which was effectively irrelevant in its influence on the course of events. It has a tiny membership and is confined to a mainly propagandist role, a political ginger group with no mass impact at all. PD, the RMG and the Socialist Workers Movement all seem interested and individuals from these organisations are joining us.

How does being a socialist affect the way you intend to fight on the national question - for example, would you agitate for street committess and organs of popular power ?

We think that the Provos are an elitist ~~and~~ militarist group who, we wouldn't want to deny, have a great deal of grassroots support, from the people. The IRSP must function in such a way as to avoid their kind of elitism. We would push for co-op shops and committess of street defence. In Derry, there are shop floor radicals, shop stewards, people who may never have joined a republican organisation, joining the IRSP. We must overcome the massive problem of the religious divisions and the way that the bosses use them to divide the working class. But the way the Officials tried to work with Protestant workers was opportunist - they tried to discard the fact that they were republicans, and drop the national question. Until the British Government stops shoring up the Ulster state, there can be no possibility of Protestant and Catholic workers joining together.

What is your analysis of the situation since the convention ?

We think the Loyalists will present the Convention with a policy document calling for a return to Stormont, to '69 and the rest, and the control of the RUC and UDR. They've certainly got the voting power to do it. They've already made sure of the Rules Committee. So what will the British response be ? They can either accept it or reject it. If they accept it then the Republican population will resent and resist it and there will be a civil war situation of some kind. If the British Government refuses to accept it then the Loyalists will set up a Provisional Loyalist Government (announced in June ed.) of Northern Ireland pledging allegiance to the crown - not to the British Government. The RUC and UDR will support this move, and, once again, civil war. Which ever way, it basically means the 'extension of conflict'... The British Army is likely to stand by for the first 48-72 hours. Then they will move in, appearing as a conciliating element. In Derry, Strabane, Newry, some of the country areas, as well as West Belfast itself, they would be able to defend themselves. 100,000 in Belfast alone.

They will bleat first to London and then probably to the United Nations, They people of the South though are likely to do something more positive. There will be mass mutinies in the Southern Army. Quite a lot of people have joined the army in the South and have influenced it. People will come across the border with weapons including field guns and mortars.

And what about the work you do in the South ? Would you tend to emphasise the need for such developments to be prepared for ?

This kind of perspective wouldn't be a major plank of our work, although there are certainly some in the IRSP who would want this. The work in the south would concentrate on the peculiar oppression of the people in the South eg, weak TU's, redundancy and so on. We would introduce the military aspects of the struggle later, but for now concentrate on where people are at. People in the South don't understand the nature of the struggle in the north.

Civil War would involve the need for means of distribution and defence etc. Do you see that this could spark off a dual power situation in the 32 cos ?

It's certainly possible, In 1969, Dublin sent the army to the border, although it was a tokenist gesture, They did nothing else. There were random support committees and collections to raise money for the North, In '69, the Government found it best to pretend that nothing was happening, and hoping the threat to them would go away. It's likely that that's what they'll try to do again.

They could also set back the struggle if the bourgeois nationalists in the south took control. It would depend in part on which party was in control when the whole thing broke. Fianna Fail might allow a little bit more, to let off steam, whereas it's likely that Fianna Gaels would try to smash all opposition. This latter tactic might actually raise the level of the struggle - there are 200 armed thugs in the Special Branch in the South now, and whereas in '68 no-one understood the role of the SB as a political police, now people are beginning to.

Could any organisation lead that struggle ?

Maybe we could but we're small. It would have to be a combination of Provos, Officials and IRSP in a United Front, Also possibly the bourgeois nationalists like Blaney and Haughey could place themselves to lead it. We must oppose their involvement. If oppression in the South increases, then the situation could change quite rapidly.

Is the belief that there's going to be a civil war generally accepted? Does the SDLP demobilise the struggle ?

The SDLP have had it. If they tried to get involved in the struggle to demobilise it, they would be told to fuck off. In 1970, the SDLP gave some leadership, by default of the Provos. That has changed. Most people seem to feel that the Convention will drag onto Autumn (at the latest) and then there will be a period of direct rule with a mounting campaign of sectarian murders. This would pull the Provos back into a defensive military campaign. It isn't generally felt that there is going to be a civil war as such, suddenly erupting onto the streets with heavy arms etc.

What about the Officials?

In Derry most of them have gone over to the IRSP, and there hasn't been too much aggro. The Officials are burnt out now as a political force - because of their stageist theory of the struggle. The feud has more or less finished them now - they've lost a massive amount of support, and are numerically contracting rapidly.

* * * * *

NOTES ON A RECENT VISIT TO THE NORTH ~ (P 20)

These are some notes from a recent visit to Belfast made by some comrades in Big Flame who work in the Troops Out Movement.

The first time that some of us 'went over' we were dead scared. That was before the truce, and things were a lot more eventful. But now, even with the truce, there is still the fear of the sectarian assassinations. If you are staying in a Catholic area and driving around, don't think that the British are the only ones who watch. The Loyalists also keep their eyes open.

The centre of Belfast is sealed off. Huge concrete bollards, oil drums linked with scaffolding outside the bars, ten foot steel railing 'security' gates with turnstiles and search points peopled with British soldiers, men and women, and UUC as well, pill boxes - you walk past them and get an odd whirr down your spine as you find yourself looking down an SLR muzzle pointed through the slot in the concrete, and wonder idly whether the man isn't too bored to have remembered to put his safety catch on. Grey (UDR) and Army Land-rovers zip around the streets. A lot of them have ten foot girders welded vertically on the front. After a few soldiers standing up in the observation hole in the back had been stopped dead by tripwires across the roads. In the back of the UDR jeeps, there's always a man holding a submachinegun looking out.

In the middle of Royal Avenue there is a big barracks. It's got a thirty foot veil of wire netting (chicken wire of sorts) up round it and tiny, paranoid windows. Despite all of this, and the saturation British soldiers round all the commercial property in the centre, the area has been bombed heavily by increasingly cunning means by the Provos, until the truce. (And a couple of times since, to warn the soldiers to lay off). And knowing that their boys (and girls) can always put one over on the Brits (the British Army) is a big boost for the people in the Republican areas.

We drove over to the Ardoyne, one of the ghettos in the West of Belfast. It is solidly Republican, quite small, ringed round with Army posts to contain it, and with Loyalist areas (including the UDA stronghold, Woodvale) from where the assassins come to kill. When we came into the area, it felt like a strange mix of intruding and safety. You can't just say to the people - "It's OK, we're OK". Would you believe everybody who said that, what with the British undercover agents, the Loyalists and journalists? Not much. Nor do the boys lounging round on the street corners. You know that as soon as you enter the area, the Brits, the Loyalists (keeping watch from over the Crumlin Rd) and the Republicans who guard the area all know you're there.

The entrances to the Ardoyne, about five in all, are blocked. The one we went through, three concrete walls half across the road form a chamber to weave through. Speedbumps slow you down. And each area is under surveillance, checking everyone through. The cameras in some of the Army posts are filming 24 hours a day, light and dark, but as loads of people said "That doesn't stop the Loyalists driving right into the Ardoyne, killing and driving right out again."

The welcome was amazing, even though only one of us had met the people there before. We were fed and then went out to a club. The clubs in the area, like those in most of the Catholic areas, have changed a lot since '69. Most of them have only been built since then, and they are

a real part of the area. In a lot of ways they serve the needs of the people in a way that no English pub does, or even club. If there's a big trouble, like the UWC strike last year, then the money from the clubs goes straight into relief funds. And the walls of some of them, inside, are covered with plaques, photos, memorials, pictures from inside the camps, things made inside the camps, photos of men and women who have been killed, with their rank if they were in the Irish Republican Army. It's an amazing list for an area as small as that - just about 2,000 families and over 100 dead.

There are even songs about how individuals lived and died for the freedom of the nation and the people. One time we were there when a woman got up and sang a song about "the radio said there's another shot dead and he died with a gun in his hand but they didn't say why Billy Reid had to die for he lied to free this Ireland" (the ballad of Billy Reid) a localman who had been shot by the British Army in 1971, as he was walking down the street. People said that they wanted to get him but he was too smart for them. So they set up a machinegun in the loft of a burnt out house and shot him as he was walking up the street one morning. The song when I heard it was so sharp and bright. Everyone said he was a fine man.

Walking round the streets, the people we're with point out this corner and that, and what happened there when, when so-and-so got shot or the riot was when a woman gentle as a mouse normally got wild and took an electric kettle from a shopfront she'd smashed in, hit an RUC man with it, swinging it round on the electric flex like a gladiator. The first time they used the gas on us, to keep us back after there had been the Loyalists and the RUC and the B Specials all attacking us, all the B Specials swearing that this time they were sure going to flatten the Ardoyne, back in '69. And down there, in Flax St, the time all the women went down to protest and the soldiers fired back with gas and rubber bullets. Well, the women went back the next day with their kids and their prams and lots, lots more women. And protested again.

The struggle is burnt into the walls. You can't forget something like that, like all of that. But the thing that was extraordinary was the lack of bitterness towards the Loyalists about it. A lot of people would just shrug and say - well, they've been brainwashed into it, they've been bought off with a pittance. Not everyone, of course, some have been hit worse than others. Most people seemed pretty cynical about the chances of the truce lasting. "The British Army don't want it and the Loyalists, the Loyalists don't want it. They just want us to fire back for all the ones of ours they kill. They're just goin on killin' and killin'. And we're not going to lie down. Why should we? We'll get worse than nothing if we do. Not after so many have died."

The constant intimidation by the Loyalists (from bullets through the post to burning out houses at night with no warning, and all the killings for the last six years) have carved up the areas of Belfast into almost completely sectarian divisions. The Army and the RUC have done nothing to prevent the large population shift. In the Ardoyne, where the housing (street by street, long two up two down terraces, holes in the road and tiny front gardens), is mostly terrible, there's a court of what from a distance looks like good new places. It was going to be a mixed bit, 60-40 Catholics/Protestants, but when the Housing Executive found that that wouldn't work, they suggested 60-40 the other way about. They still couldn't get Protestants to live there. (Rather than move into a house vacated by a Catholic who has been driven out of a mixed area, Protestants will make sure it's bricked up.) So they ordered a stop on all the houses, right as they were still being built, some near finished. There are roof tiles still stacked

on the joists, waiting for your man to come to finish off the next day. He won't. Most of the houses are still unfinished. Housing, like everything else, has become a battleground of class struggle. On the one side, the Housing Executive, trying on behalf of the state to control the minority by allocation of bad housing in ghetto areas, and the intimidation, and the Army adviser who works as a design consultant on big housing projects in the 6 cos - for ensuring ease of future security operations. On the other, the mass rent and rate strikes, the use that the IRA has made of the geography of their areas to fight as urban guerrillas, the squatting by de-housed Catholics.

After all, it is first and foremost a class struggle going on. It is difficult to see through all the smokescreen of the British media to see that. But it is. And it has brought out the best in people, of revolutionary confidence and imagination. People in the minority areas are proud, and know each other.

The first day we were there, someone said to us "When we've kicked the British Army out, and dealt with the Loyalists if needs be, then the real struggle begins." What's that then? "The struggle for international socialism." That from a militant republican. When you are fighting like that, who the bosses are and who the enemy becomes clear. The fact that over 50% of the men in the area haven't got a job, and the role of the police force and the housing thing, the way power is, what power under capitalism and for revolution means - it's all so clear to people. If not as eloquently as from a lot of people over here, they say it better.

"You want the Brits out, then?" we asked a kid we were walking up the street with. He turned sideways to us. Grinned. What do you think?

* * * * *

PEER POWER THREATENS CHURCH MURKINSHY - the case of Canon Murphy.

CANON PADRAIG MURPHY of Belfast has a reputation for being one of the most pro-imperialist Roman Catholic priests in Ireland (which, in view of the pro-Establishment views of most priests, is saying something). Virtually every Sunday sees Canon Murphy in the pulpit attacking every aspect of the struggle against British imperialism.

Everyone who supports the Irish Republican Movement is violently criticised. Yet, although hundreds of his parishioners have suffered death, injury and imprisonment at the hands of the British Army and the Loyalist sectarian killers, he utters not a word against these forces. For Canon Murphy the "men of violence" are the IRA (even when they maintaining a ceasefire) but the campaign of murder by the UVF and UDA which has claimed over 40 lives this year, are barely mentioned.

Murphy's reactionary views extend, not surprisingly, into education and the role of religion. He's violently opposed to any limitation on the hold the Catholic church has over people's lives and ideas. In particular, he opposes any attempt at integrated education which would reduce the influence of the Church on children's upbringing. Not surprisingly, he was angered by a newspaper article which advocated integrated education, written by journalist Ciaran McKeown. The article itself was hardly radical, as it suggested that eliminating schools of different religion would eliminate the present conflict in

He conveniently omitted the fact that the "religious question" in Ireland only exists because it has been British policy for years, hundreds of years, to create material differences between workers of different faiths. Just removing differences in religious education without touching the British presence in Ireland, is no solution at all.

Nevertheless, the article was enough to make Canon Murphy react. The journalist's father, Sean McKeown, is Headmaster of St Thomas' Secondary School for Boys, Whiterock, in Father Murphy's parish. Mr McKeown has worked at the school for 20 years, but suddenly he's being retired early. To quote.

The reaction of the pupils of Mr McKeown was almost immediate. Over 200 boys marched from the school to Fr. Murphy's house on the Falls Rd and sat down in the road outside. They demanded that the Head master be reinstated and clearly blamed Murphy for the sacking. Parents of the boys are planning similar marches and petitions demanding the head is allowed to stay.

They are also investigating the case of Father Desmond Wilson, a Ballymurphy priest in the same parish, who recently resigned because he could not continue to work with Father Murphy. Wilson had been known to criticise the British Army treatment of Ballymurphy residents and this did not meet with Father Murphy's approval.

And last year Mother Teresa, who had run a world famous charity in poverty-stricken Calcutta, arrived in Ballymurphy to work. But even Mother Teresa, no radical, (just very charity minded) was critical of the Army occupation and of the lack of support the church gave to the people. She left Ballymurphy soon afterwards in a hurry.

The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church has traditionally had a powerful hold over the activities of the Irish working class. Any attempt at change or protest at the lousy conditions in which people are forced to live are quickly criticised and snuffed by the majority of parish priests. Even people who dared to use contraception or get a divorce came under the eye of the priest and could become a victimised 'black sheep' of the community.

This can still occur - but things are changing. With their country occupied by British troops and an active resistance fighting to throw them out, the Irish people have to decide which side they are on. And it becomes clearer every day that all the powers-that-be, the Church, the education system, the employers, local government and the police and the Army, North and South, are in favour of British economic and political control of Ireland. Only the working class and sections of the lower middle class are prepared to fight for Irish independence.

As a result, for the first time in 50 years in Ireland, all the institutions that keep the working class in "its place" are being questioned and found wanting. And it is the national struggle that has made this possible.

That's why the iron grip of Father Padraig Murphy and of the Catholic church is finally being loosened.

* * * * *

TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT -

WHAT'S GOING ON 241

Following the success of the Labour Movement Conference on Ireland, held by the Troops Out Movement in the Collegiate Theatre on May 24th., a number of the revolutionary groups - notably the Trotskyist groups - have made decisions to take working in the T.O.M. more seriously. IMG have said they will help "stiffen the leadership of the TOM" by sending some of their leading members into London TOM groups. Workers' Fight have also decided to enter the TOM on masse. Sadly, this mass entry has been marred by a growth of factionalism in the TOM - with the political differences between the different Trotskyist tendencies increasingly obscure in the heap of abuse and insult which is the ammunition of these personalised power struggles (usually between powerful men). All this is squeezing out comrades who are independent of the political groups. Following the Labour Movement conference, Workers' Fight made a very strong attack on the Troops Out Movement - particularly the so-called "bureaucracy of the TOM".

OUR REPLY TO WORKERS' FIGHT Dear comrades,

Your report of the recent Labour Movement conference on Ireland, organised by the Troops Out Movement ("Workers' Fight" May 31st), contains a highly critical and polemical attack on what you call the "TOM bureaucracy". We in the Ireland Committee of Big Flame are well placed to reply, both because of our record of consistent work in the TOM (two Big Flame militants were among the 6 people who started the TOM in October 1973), and because while we agree with some of the political points you raise, in the context of the way that WF has related to the Troops Out Movement - and to this conference in particular - we reject your position as hypocritical, fictional and in practice incapable of developing any significant Irish solidarity movement in this country. Let us explain.

1. We can begin from the most glaring piece of hypocrisy. You correctly criticise the presence of Leo Abse at the conference. Yet at the time when that invitation was issued by the TOM, only Big Flame militants opposed his attendance. The student organiser of TOM, a prominent member of Workers' Fight, was present at the meeting where this decision was ratified. The same comrade had spoken at the press conference 3 weeks prior to the May 24th Conference at which the strongly anti-Republican statement of Abse was first made public. On neither occasion did Workers' Fight argue to have Abse excluded from the platform of the Conference. How, in the light of this, can you now summon the nerve to make criticisms of Abse's invitation (and even send these criticisms to Republican News in Belfast for publication), as though your comrades took no part in this decision? No criticism without self-criticism, comrades!

2. This is not an isolated mistake on your part. In our view, it flows from your consistent refusal in practice to take seriously the urgent task of building TOM as the core of a mass anti-imperialist movement on Ireland in this country. We know that WF has criticisms of the T.O.M. In particular, you have argued that T.O.M. is unprincipled because it does not take a clear solidarity position with the republican struggle. We in Big Flame do not agree. We are in wholehearted solidarity with the republican movement, but we believe that the T.O.M. is the best vehicle for building a campaign which can achieve actual solidarity with the Irish struggle. It is no good battering principled heads against a hard brick wall, and the fact is

that the T.O.M. would never have gained the support which it does have in the Labour Movement had it begun with an explicit position of solidarity with the republican movement. As it is, we are building a movement objectively in solidarity with the struggle, and in which many militants have already been won to a position of explicit solidarity themselves.

Your article describes the T.O.M. 'leadership' as "'high' on their visions of themselves as leaders of a mass movement". This gross caricature is the device you use to excuse your own failures viz a viz T.O.M. We have no illusions about the chauvinism which exists in the British working-class, and we do not draw simple-minded parallels with the situation in the USA during the Vietnam war. But the success of TOM events has proved that it is possible to build a campaign capable of mass mobilisations significantly larger than the sum of left groups.

3. Your attack on the positions taken up by the T.O.M. has been highly personalised and unprincipled. You describe the sight of Gery Lawless at the Conference as "truly bizarre and degrading". Nothing can excuse this kind of attack on a comrade who has devoted so much time and energy to the building of a campaign in solidarity with the Irish struggle. We have our tactical differences with comrade Lawless (such as over Leo Abse), and we make our positions clear, but this kind of personal attack is totally unnecessary. You go on to slur to TOM national co-ordinators as the "TOM bureaucracy". This is an attack on comrades - elected every 6 months - who in the face of constant criticism and scepticism from groups such as IS, WF, and IMG have built a movement which because of its success WF is now forced to take seriously. What sort of "bureaucracy" is it that allows all amendments to be debated at its Conference? What sort of anti-Workers' Fight bureaucracy is it that allows 3 WF speakers and has as the chairman of the Standing Orders Committee a member of WF itself? If who was allowed to speak was such a 'coincidence' then you should check it out with one of your own members.

4. The crux of our criticism is that you have continually demanded that T.O.M. accept Workers' Fight's perspectives, without proving in practice that you are committed as an organisation to consistent practical work to build T.O.M. in the interests of the Irish struggle. Activists do not take kindly to advice from onlookers, and in private many of your comrades admit that until recently Workers' Fight overall has done little in T.O.M. but look on.

Inside the T.O.M. Big Flame militants have argued that TOM should place more emphasis on the Prevention of Terrorism Act, that Abse's views should have been explicitly denounced at the Conference and that T.O.M. branches should begin relief work for the Republican ghettos and contribute to the building of the T.O.M. We are opposed to your past emphasis on relief committees, which has counter-posed the building of a relief campaign to the building of T.O.M.). We are currently proposing that T.O.M. takes up the slogan "No to a Loyalist state", as the Loyalists attempt to reconsolidate their hold on the N. Ireland state. We fight for these things. But we also believe that we have to win the right to be heard by T.O.M. militants. Our final point is that while we welcome the recent mass entry of WF militants into the TOM, we trust that this will not mean an intensification of the factionalism and passive sectarianism of WF in relation to the TOM. No more threats to politically "carve up the TOM bureaucracy" or of a "major faction fight" comrades. The task is urgent - to build the largest possible anti-imperialist movement on Ireland in the shortest possible time.

Big Flame Ireland Commission.

The NCC (made up of one delegate from each out of London TOM branch, two delegates from each London TOM branch plus the National Co-ordinators) met, yet again, in London. The atmosphere at the meeting was very highly charged, and extremely factious. It became very difficult for anyone to vote simply on the merit of the arguments and resolutions presented - personalities and power-groupings were obscuring the argument the whole time. The meeting lasted seven hours! and there were 31 branch resolutions.

Following the reports from the National Officers and a brief item on the 5 July march against the Prevention of Terrorism Act (which involved a dispute between the Organising Committee of T.O.M. and members of Workers' Fight who wanted to set up a more permanent campaign as a result of the march), there followed a long wrangle on the Free Speech on Ireland demonstration planned for later this year. Members of RCG and Workers' Fight wanted to make it a precondition of the setting up of an Ad Hoc Committee involving the CP that the T.O.M. should be able to carry all its own slogans and placards. Members of the Organising Committee wanted to form the Ad Hoc Committee first, and then fight for the right to carry all the slogans and placards - they wanted to have no obstacles to the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee - because the CP was just looking for an excuse to get out of the demonstration. They said that there was more or less no possibility of TOM not being able to carry its placards and demands on what was to be, after all, a free speech on Ireland demo - about the Jenkins Act, the trials of the British Withdrawal Campaign members, and the ban on TOM from using Trafalgar Square.

The whole debate was soon couched in terms of "more principled" than thou! politics. For us the issue is fairly simple. We believe that it would be in the interests of the urgent needs of the Irish struggle to have a mass demonstration on these questions - which are directly part of the Irish struggle - and it would be a victory to force the CP into a joint demonstration with the T.O.M. In particular, it would make harder for the leadership of the CP to argue that TOM shouldn't be touched with a barge pole. It would make the conditions for the debate that the RCG is always talking about, with the CP, much more favourable. BUT IT WOULD ALSO BE A CONCRETE ACT OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE IRISH STRUGGLE. At the end of the debate, the resolution giving the organisers a free hand in negotiating with the CP etc. was passed by 26 - 10 (only RCG and Workers' Fight members against).

Branch resolutions showed the same spirit. Resolutions condemning the 'TOM bureaucracy' for stifling democracy were thrown out for a resolution proposed by Big Flame militants in the TOM which recognised the overload on the national officers - and calling for a Secretariat to be set up, partly to improve internal democracy & communication. Two other motions proposed by Big Flame militants were also passed overwhelmingly - one calling for a Contingency Committee for the summer to make sure TOM can react to any emergency situation in Ireland during the summer, and to investigate ways of channelling relief funds to the North; the other proposing that TOM should raise the agitational slogan 'No to a Loyalist state' in the coming period. Only RCG and IMG members voted against these resolutions. A motion from W. London (initiated by the RCG) saying that Leo Abse should have been denounced from the Conference platform on May 24th, was supported by everyone apart from the IMG - and an amendment from Big Flame militants which proposed a specific strategy for work with MP's was passed overwhelmingly. Finally, motions initiated by the RCG which argued that it shouldn't be necessary for a potential branch to prove its activity first, were defeated.

Whatever the spirit of this motion from the RCG, it's clear that this would have enabled paper branches to be set up to swamp the TOM with delegates whose needs were not based on activity. It's also worth saying that TOM is not going to survive as a debating society - and few people are going to be willing to attend meetings such as this one, which last 7 hours and try to discuss 31 resolutions.

And just for the record Big Flame was opposed to inviting Abse both because of his views on Ireland (his understanding of self-determination is not the same as ours) and because his views on abortion are an anathema to many, many women (and many men). Inviting Abse makes it harder for T.O.M. to develop a principled relationship with the Women's Movement on the Irish question. We would not, however have been against inviting Wellbeloved MP, as long as his views had been firmly attacked at the time (James Wellbeloved is another right-wing Labour MP, but he isn't campaigning against abortion).

RELIEF WORK:

Kirkby TOM Branch has been very active in developing grass roots working class support for TOM on the Kirkby estate near Liverpool. Mass door sales of the Alt White Paper have been really successful - and Kirkby TOM has twinned with the Short Strand in Belfast, and started relief collections to send there (to the Relief Committee). Already 20 families have joined in, with a small weekly levy.

IN THE COURTS.....

THE BIRMINGHAM 9: On Aug 4th, 7 people were charged with 'conspiracy to cause explosions in Birmingham between 1 August '73 & 2 Aug. '74. A few days later, 2 more were charged. During the time they were held, many of the men sustained serious injuries. Pat Guilfoyle was beaten up by police with pickaxe handles, threatened with a loaded gun in his mouth and thrown out of a 5th floor window by his ankles. James Ashe was meant to have tried to kill himself by burning himself with 60 cigarettes the police were meant to have given him (this was to explain why he had cigarette burns all over him) - and when the first 7 appeared in court the first time, most were hardly able to stand up because of the injuries they'd received. When the 9 were found guilty and given 12 yr sentences, uproar broke out in court. One of the defence lawyers said it had all been fixed, so he hadn't tried very hard. During the trial, the police could produce no evidence that the men knew each other, yet they were sentenced to consiprign together..... THEY CAN JAIL THE REVOLUTIONARY - BUT NEVER THE REVOLUTION!!

THE BIRMINGHAM PUB BOMBINGS TRIAL: This trial started on 9 June at Lancaster Castle - Lancaster because of "the strength of local feelings" in Brum. The prosecutor opened by saying that the bombings were "an illogical operation to avenge the death of James McDade". 6 people - Walkers, Hill, Hunter, McIlkenny, Power and Callaghan - are accused of the murder of 21 people - while Murray, Kelly and Shocham were charged with conspiracy to cause explosions. Already there are strange happenings - one of the main prosecution witnesses turns out to be a National Front supporter (well-known in Birmingham). The man's name is Thomas Watt - and even strnager - it has emerged that it was in Watt's house that Kenneth Littlejohn, British Spy and Agent Provocateur in Ireland, had been staying in the Birmingham area after his 'escape' from Mountjoy jail, thus establishing a strong connection between Littlejohn and the National Front. It turns out that Thomas Watt worked in the same factory as some of the defendants and had apparently been informing on his workmates to the police for 6 months before the bombing - indicating that the police used the National Front as a spying agency. It also turns out that one of the defendants - Kelly - is a Protestant, and there are some indications that he once had connections with the UDA. The other defendants are catholic-born.

— ABOUT THIS IRISH BULLETIN —

This is the third issue of the BIG FLAME Irish Bulletin. It comes out regularly every two months, and covers in some detail what has been happening in the struggle in Ireland, some of its effects over here, and what Big Flame thinks we should be doing here in Britain to aid the Irish struggle (particularly through the Troops Out Movement).

Members of BIG FLAME have been working in the Troops Out Movement since it began (in fact, 2 Big Flame comrades were among the 6 people who founded the T.O.M. in October 1973). We believe that the Troops Out Movement has to be built urgently - and through the activity of the branches along with national activities. T.O.M. branches have to make themselves the focus for all people who are against British imperialism in Ireland living in their areas.

Clearly it's never been as urgent to build a massive campaign for the right of the whole Irish people to national freedom - and therefore for TROOPS OUT NOW! This bulletin is for use by T.O.M. members, as a reference source, to help to get more people involved in our struggle around Ireland - and to help people understand what is happening there. It's only on this basis that we can develop a clear analysis and strategy.

The struggle in Ireland is coming to the crunch. Most people agree on that. Soon it's going to be totally impossible for any comrade to be politically active and know nothing of the struggle in Ireland. So we'd like to know how useful this bulletin is, how it can be made better, and what, in general, you think about it. This issue contains a specific analysis by the Big Flame Ireland Commission about the situation in Ireland, and a letter to Workers' Fight about their recent attacks on the Troops Out Movement. We'd welcome replies to these, and to an article we print from a comrade in the T.O.M. about what we mean by "Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole".

The major sources for this bulletin have been: 1. a recent visit by Big Flame militants to Ireland 2. reports from comrades in the north of Ireland 3. the Republican press 4. the British bourgeois press 5. Irish Weekly 6. The left press in Britain.

— ABOUT BIG FLAME —

BIG FLAME is a Marxist revolutionary socialist organisation in England. We are fighting for a classless communist society of real equality and real energy and creativity. We are fighting for power to the working class. As an internationalist group, we have close links with other groups abroad, and we try to work in a concrete way to give solidarity with struggles abroad. Our work in T.O.M. is an example of that. In our work in the class struggle in Britain, our aim is to build the struggle and at the same time to develop the struggle by building a conscious revolutionary communist leadership within the struggle. So Big Flame groups around the country are involved in working around four major car plants, hospitals all over the place, many other sections of industry, and in the working-class communities where we live, particularly - as a group with a feminist perspective - with working class women.

There are Big Flame groups in the following places. If you want to know more about us, or get any other literature, contact us at:

BIG FLAME IRELAND COMMISSION: 79c Anerley Road London SE20
BIG FLAME WOMEN'S COMMISSION: 13 Tadmor Street London W12
BIRMINGHAM: c/o Bookshop, 632 Bristol Road, Birmingham 29. 021-472-7019
LIVERPOOL: 66 Logan Towers Liverpool 5 051-207-5400
MANCHESTER: 317 Bradford St. Manchester 10.